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ABSTRACT

Bold, innovative thinking must be encouraged in the changing field of agricultural education. More than ever, the community needs fresh ideas. The agricultural education community will lose nothing of the past by working together to embrace the challenges and opportunities of the future as long as the essential values are not discarded. The mission of agricultural education is to provide a total dynamic educational system, aspiring to excellence and serving the needs of all people. The participants at the National Summit on Agricultural Education resolved to develop a united national presence and move toward achievements, pursuing a national mission made up of 22 resolutions for change for the future. From the resolutions, seven goals can be set, concerning updating, serving all groups, expanding the whole person concept of education, developing educational programs to meet demands, fostering free enterprise, providing leadership, and elevating standards of excellence in all facets of agricultural education. From these goals flows a three-step strategic plan: (1) creating a mission document; (2) challenging each organization in the community to align its goals with the national mission; and (3) clearly and constantly communicating the goals of the agricultural education community. (KC)

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The Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education

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A National Mobilization Plan for Revolutionary Change in Agricultural Education.

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Strategic Plan Introduction

Change is rampant in agriculture, and agricultural education must keep pace or become an obsolete remnant of the past. If the agricultural education community is to meet the challenge of change, we must answer two questions: "Who are we?" and "What is our purpose?" The agricultural education community must begin answering these questions collectively and in a way that renews, confirms and revitalizes the community's collective sense of esteem, purpose and meaning.

It is essential that bold, innovative thinking be encouraged and revitalized to prevent stagnation and rejection. More than ever, the community needs fresh ideas. Meetings and forums must be a safe and comfortable place for risk taking and innovative thinking.

The agricultural education community will lose nothing of the past by moving together to embrace the challenges and opportunities of the future so long as the essential values are upheld and not discarded.

The primary vision for the future of agricultural education as articulated through the following resolutions, mission statement, values and goals was collectively recognized by the members of the National Summit on Agricultural Education.

The vision spawned a mission. The mission triggered goals. The goals can and will be achieved via specific tactical objectives formulated by the entire agricultural education community, resulting in a cohesive, dynamic, forward looking, market-driven agricultural education program.

The community needs to move forward unified by an over-arching mission, confident in our publically recognized values and energized by mutually-agreed-upon goals and objectives.

There is no question that agricultural education will achieve together what none of its components could achieve alone. What follows is an outline of a vision and an invitation for everyone to vigorously contribute and participate in the achievement of excellence.

Mission Statement for Agricultural Education

The mission of agricultural education is to provide a total dynamic educational system.

We aspire to excellence as we recruit, prepare and support individuals in agricultural careers.

We serve the people and inform them about agriculture, its needs, opportunities and challenges.

We value:

providing instruction in and about agriculture

serving all populations

developing the whole person

responding to the needs of the marketplace

advocating free enterprise and entrepreneurship education

functioning as a part of the total educational system

utilizing a proven educational process which includes formal instruction, experiential learning, leadership and personal development.

Summit Resolutions

In February and May 1989, the National Summit on Agricultural Education was held for the purpose of developing The Strategic Plan For Agricultural Education. As a part of the valuing process, the following twenty-two stated beliefs or resolutions were formed.

We, the participants of the National Summit on Agricultural Education, do hereby resolve to,

1. Develop a united national presence and collectively move toward great achievements in education and agriculture.

2. Align personal and program agendas beneath a single overarching mission.

3. Pursue the national mission with integrity and high expectations of excellence.

4. Demonstrate by actions the confidence and faith placed in publicly stated bedrock values.

5. Move with one will and speak with one voice on crucial issues and opportunities.

6. Charge the National Council for Agricultural Education with the responsibility of being "servant leader" in the coordination and orchestration of the national presence.

7. Promote trust, teamwork and synergy through an unyielding national commitment to the Three C's: Communication, Cooperation and Coordination.

8. Encourage and recognize bold thinking, creativity and innovation.

9. Recognize the strength in diversity; move towards oneness, not sameness.

10. Expect and encourage participation, initiative, leadership and integrity in every role, at every level.

11. Expand the network of relationships between education and science, business, industry, government, the arts and the community.

12. Provide cutting edge technology, training and information, and promote life-long learning at every level throughout the profession.

13. Move proactively rather than reactively; focus on desired long-term outcomes rather than temporary short-term problems.

14. Maintain bridges between the old and the new; embrace change while honoring and preserving traditional roots.

15. Serve as role models and mentors; lead by example.

16. Seek out deeper resources and expanded financial support through effective marketing.

17. Aggressively, honestly and professionally tell our story in every school, community and nation in which we operate.

18. Honor our obligations and actively contribute to each community, state or nation in which we operate.

19. Reaffirm dedicated stewardship of the environment.

20. Challenge each individual and organization to translate the National Mission and the seven National goals into reality with specific objectives and action plans that are measurable, realistic and attainable.

21. Accept accountability for decisions and actions.

22. Regularly review our mission, values, goals, priorities and objectives, making appropriate course corrections.

These resolutions are the result of the National Summit on Agricultural Education. Each resolution stands alone and are ranked in no particular order.

Goals

Overarching national goals that are realistic and clearly understood by everyone in agricultural education will help focus our combined energy. In this context, 'goals' are not meant to be a specific target but rather focal points to set overall priorities for agricultural education and serve to focus and guide decisions throughout the community. Goals are a direct reflection and extension of our values. (Note: Specific objectives that carry out the seven goals below will be formulated by each of the various agricultural education organizations)

GOAL 1: To update instruction in agriculture and expand programs about agriculture.

As the world changes and advances, agricultural education will respond and advance with it. Immediate priority must be placed on reviewing and updating curriculums.

First, the prevailing accent on production agriculture must give way to a much broader agenda, including such topics as: agricultural commodities; agribusiness marketing and management in a global economy, public policy, environmental and resource management, nutrition and health.

Second, we must make a concerted effort to bring meaningful programs about agriculture to all people in the nation. Total agricultural literacy must be our focus as we strive to educate the public.

We seek to provide both: A comprehensive contemporary program of education for the career-bound agriculture student; and a basic program about agriculture for all students in the nation.

GOAL 2: To serve all people and groups equally and without discrimination.

We believe the greatest agricultural resource is the human resource. And we affirm our commitment to reach, attract and develop the human potential of all people—regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin or condition of advantage.

Historically, agricultural education has been most attractive to white male students in rural areas. More females are enrolling in the program, but minority and special intrest group enrollments remain disproportionately low.

Action is required to remove the stereotype. We must redesign our programs and activities, as well as mobilize media, government, industry, education and community support groups to help achieve an enrollment that reflects our diverse society. If there must be a stereotype, let it have nothing to do with race, creed, sex or color. Let it have everything to do with effort, energy, ideas, commitment and capabilities.

GOAL 3: To amplify and expand the "whole person" concept of education, including leadership, personal and interpersonal skills.

Over the years, agricultural education has distinguished itself through unique and highly effective programs that instill confidence, initiative, responsible citizenship, leadership and real-world know-how in its members. In particular, our student organizations continue to evolve model programs and activities that deserve to be studied and perhaps emulated by all branches of education.

Despite the excellent track record, we must expand and refine the "whole person" concept to include all students, not just those who join student organizations.

We accept the responsibility to promote and enable meaningful participation in our proven programs of leadership, personal and interpersonal skills for all students.

GOAL 4: To develop educational programs that continually and systematically respond to the trends and demands of the marketplace.

We believe that agribusiness and agricultural education are integrally connected to a dynamic, ever-changing marketplace.

In the past we could rely on books and curriculums to provide accurate information for several years. Today, however, we must develop creative ways to continually monitor the pulse of the marketplace for our students.

Like the management philosophies of successful companies, education must be able to quickly respond to market-driven stimuli. Successful agricultural education programs will impact the marketplace and the marketplace will in turn impact our programs.

GOAL 5: To provide the stimuli that will foster the spirit of free enterprise and develop creative entrepreneurship and innovation.

The greatness of American business and industry is a result of the spirit of competition. Only the spirit of free enterprise and entrepreneurship can continually rekindle that aspiration to greatness.

There was a time when people struggled to cultivate ten acres of ground and provide for their family. Today, agriculture and agricultural education have the power, knowledge and equipment to build a world beyond our imagination.

The key is to continually stimulate the free flow of fresh ideas in a healthy competitive environment. Ideas build on ideas to create progress; agricultural education must never be satisfied with "status quo."

GOAL 6: To provide leadership and cultivate strong partnerships in the total educational system.

Our all-out commitment to the Three C's—Communication, Cooperation and Coordination—begins at home in the agricultural education community. From there, however, we must strive to expand the quantity and quality of our relationships with colleagues throughout all of education.

Historically, agricultural education programs have been isolated, literally and figuratively, from other subject areas on school campuses. Isolation robs everyone. We must make it a top priority to enter the mainstream of education so that we can contribute and receive both ideas and leadership. Agricultural education must seek ways to be "a part of...not apart from" our colleagues throughout the educational system.

GOAL 7: To elevate and extend our standards of excellence in classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised experience and student organizations.

We believe that all students should participate in classroom/laboratory instruction in agriculture under the direction of a qualified teacher using modern equipment and facilities and a competency based curriculum. Further, the instruction needs to be articulated in progression from one level to the next. Supervised experience should provide practical real-world experiences in agriculture, develop a positive work ethic and realistic occupation expectations.

All students shall have the opportunity to participate in a student organization.

Currently, the shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate tools and facilities hamper the development of quality programs. In many areas the instructional programs are not competency based or articulated. At present a significant number of students do not participate in a supervised experience. Leadership development provided through agricultural education has a successful image and track record. What is needed is a concerted effort to extend our standard of excellence in agricultural education.

Strategic Plan Summary and Call to Action

Agricultural education is not alone in this strategic planning endeavor. We live in an era in which external factors are causing virtually all major companies and organizations to reevaluate themselves from top to bottom. At the end of these reviews, very few are concluding that the responsible course of action is to continue conducting business as usual.

"A company (or organization) must change faster than the world around it," summarizes a statement by General Electric. "Winners and losers are clearly more definable today: you are either the very best at what you do, or you don't do it for very long."

The Strategic Plan for Agricultural Education, then, is an affirmation and a call to action. It publicly affirms the profession's intention to do what is necessary to become and remain "the very best at what we do," whatever the future may bring. And it calls on every person in agricultural education to join and contribute to a process and plan that will enable us to endlessly generate the required and desired changes—collectively, systematically and effectively.

What shall we call our plan, our process, for meeting the challenge of change? Members of the National Summit on Agricultural Education struggled for an honest, accurate answer.

Some have referred to such a process as "retooling" the organization. Others have called it a process of "reorienting, or termed it "reinventing" the organization around a fresh and resurgent vision of the future.

Each of these terms begins with the prefix "re," and each is applicable to the positive process envisioned here for agricultural education. In the end, however, the Summit members settled on yet another "re" term—one that more accurately describes this particular vision and plan. That word is "revolution," and one of its core definitions is crystal-clear: *Sudden and progressive activity or movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the situation.*

Truly, if today's leaders are to fully embrace the responsibilities of the era, the time has come for agricultural education to plant a big, bold, positive capital R in front of the old word "evolution." Evolution may sound more comfortable and reassuring, but right now Revolution is more responsible and required.

STEP ONE in the revolution was taken with the creation of this document by representative leaders from the various national organizations. Throughout the nation, our commonly-held and publicly-stated mission, goals and values will provide the central focus for the vital interaction that will build and expand the national presence through concerted action for excellence.

The National Council for Agricultural Education (The Council) has been charged with the responsibility of coordinating and orchestrating this national interaction.

STEP TWO requests and challenges each organization in the profession to align its own mission, goals and objectives in ways that contribute significantly and measurably to the national presence.

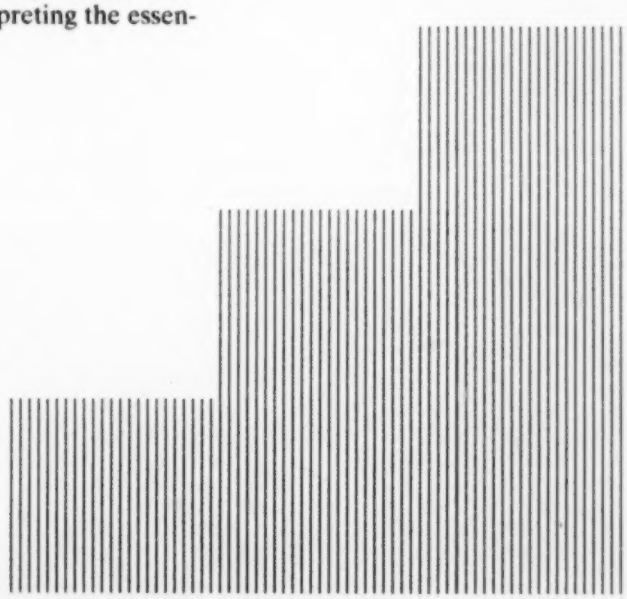
There is great strength in our diversity, but we must channel and coordinate it, eliminating cross-purposes, weeding out redundancy, and maximizing mutual support and synergy. Each organization has its own vital agenda and goals, but we must all work together toward our seven national goals, recognizing that no one person or organization has "the" answer and that it is only through allied effort that a true revolution in excellence can be fought and won.

In the weeks and months to come, it is expected that each organization in agricultural education will "flesh out" the seven national goals outlined in this document with specific objectives, tactics, programs and dates for achievement. There is no speed limit on the pursuit of excellence. The quickness of each organization, its willingness to push the state of the art and its efficiency in carrying through on its respective written objectives will all have a major impact on the national presence and agricultural education in general.

STEP THREE runs concurrent with Step Two and is never-ending. We must clearly and constantly communicate our mission, goals, values and objectives to every person at every level throughout the national presence. And we must do it in a way that wins support and transmits action into the very fabric of agricultural education.

Not just words, but action, tactics, strategies, implementation, measurement, recognition and celebration of personal achievement are crucial for success. Each organization, each leader, each teacher must continually take the accountability for clearly communicating and interpreting the essentials of the national plan in ways that stimulate enthusiasm and action at every level. From there, our message and our results will be communicated to the public via an aggressive national communication plan coordinated by The Council.

If we expect to attract top people to our programs, we ourselves must <u>be</u> top people and our programs must <u>be</u> top programs. The national mobilization for a revolution in agricultural education is underway. Let's move together effectively!



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National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS)

National Young Farmer Educational Association (NYFEA)

National FFA Alumni Association

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